

# Grappling with the New Testament

## Sessions 6 & 7

# CORINTHIANS



Paul  
and the growth of  
the Early Church



Learning for  
Discipleship  
Programme

2023 - 2025

Grappling with the New Testament  
Sessions 6 & 7: Paul and the Growth of the Early Church

1. The Wild Card? Saul of Tarsus

1.1 'The founding figures of the Jerusalem Church, led initially by Peter and then by James, brother of Jesus, were Aramaic-speaking, Galilean Jewish men. They had all walked and talked with Jesus; shared meals and crossed hostile territory together. All had time to 'inwardly digest' the teachings and the spirit of Jesus's radical approaches to traditional Judaism. They had known him personally and intimately.' (from session 5)



1.2 **Saul of Tarsus** presents a very different person with a startlingly different starting point on his journey along The Way. His was a deeply personal, mystical experience which physically affected him, upturned his previous views and drove him dynamically in establishing Christian communities throughout the eastern Mediterranean. This unforeseen 'arrival' on the canvas of the picture of the Christian church's beginnings forged a new path in the evolution of the Church. This challenged the organisation, leadership, values and *Christology* that the leadership of Peter and the Apostles had been establishing.

**Saul's own account of his conversion experience**

Read Galatians chapter 1 verses 11 to 24

*There are three further accounts of Saul's conversion, all in Acts of the Apostles (Acts 9, Acts 22 and Acts 26)*

1.3 Realising the serendipitous nature of Paul's personal experience and his capability to bring to the Church a tremendous spiritual imagination, drive and organisation, we may argue that this was a crucial '**point of departure**' which shaped future Church history. Notwithstanding those who may assume the existence of some form of predestination (i.e., that this was all pre-ordained), historians might argue that things did not have to happen this way – but they did!

*A point of departure...  
A point of departure...  
A point of departure*

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### Activity 1: Conversion of Saul

Looking at Paul's account of his experience (**Galatians 1**), how does he seem to understand what had happened to him?

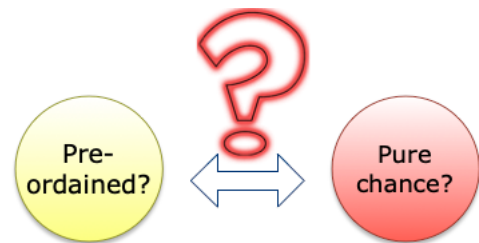


Fig. 1

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## 2. Pushing Boundaries

- 2.1 After the martyrdom of Stephen (see Acts 6 and 7) the Hellenist Jewish Christians seem to have left Jerusalem to settle in Antioch and elsewhere. The doubly hostile<sup>1</sup> environment appears to have been unsustainable.
- 2.2 Paul's advent in the Christian fold brought further challenges to a Jewish-led and Galilean/Judean and Aramaic-speaking central leadership. Paul brought an urban and urbane, cultured, Hellenised persona to the forum of the Church's counsels. Not everyone was liked this!

### Acts 9:19b to 25<sup>2</sup>

He [*Saul*] was with the disciples in Damascus for some days, <sup>20</sup> and immediately he began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God.' <sup>21</sup> All who heard were amazed, and said, 'Is not this the man who ravaged those in Jerusalem who invoke this name, and has come here for the purpose of taking them bound to the chief priests?' <sup>22</sup> Saul's power increased steadily, and he confounded the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Messiah. <sup>23</sup> Some days later the Jews plotted to kill him, <sup>24</sup> but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, <sup>25</sup> but his disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket.

- 2.3 A differing outlook and an evolving *Christology*<sup>3</sup> were to challenge the Jerusalem Church. The start of Church expansion into towns and cities of the eastern Mediterranean meant that the more limited, 'Jesus the man'-focused views of the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem were insufficient and too limiting in face of the 'push and pull' factors now increasingly coming into play (**Fig. 2** below);

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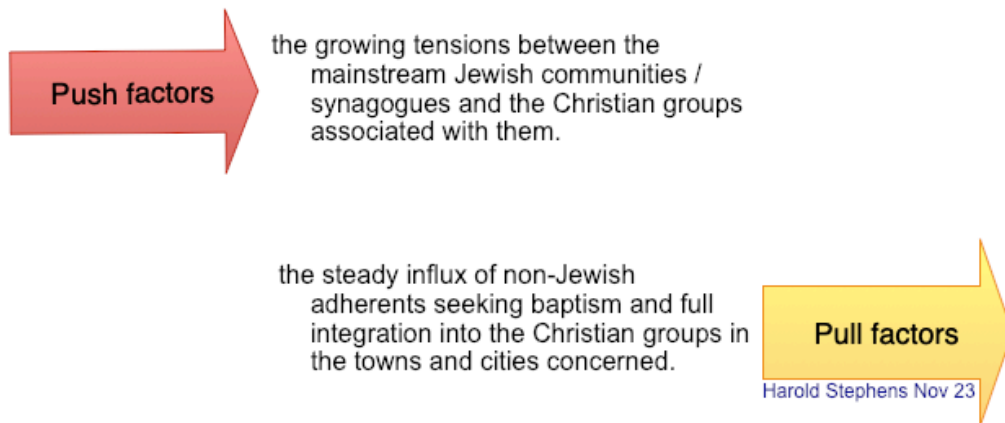
<sup>1</sup> i.e. hostility from non-Hellenistic Jews and also the Jewish-led Church of Jerusalem

<sup>2</sup> Revised New Jerusalem Bible Translation *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> Christology is explained in the resource for Session 5.

## A growing and Evolving Church

Fig. 2



- 2.4 'Paul, a Jewish convert and theologian, reflected on many occasions about the significance of Jesus' appearance as the Saviour. It is in Paul's theological elaboration that Jesus becomes the Saviour of all humankind, not only the Saviour of the Jews, but of all, including Greeks (in other words pagans) and even the departed.... It is thus with Paul's commentaries and proclamations that some clearer views on Jesus emerged and became the framework of the emergent doctrine of the Church'<sup>4</sup>
- 2.5 The author, Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski continues; 'The next important stage in the development of Christian identity came when the missionaries of the new religion encountered both their closest Jewish opponents, as well as pagan neighbours. Declaration of faith in the crucified-but-alive Lord called for more than just the emotional proclamation: 'Jesus is the Lord. Amen.' Among the new converts to this Jesus movement were intellectuals with a philosophical education who tried to explain the core of the Christian faith in terms of their cultural background.'<sup>5</sup>
- 2.6 Famously the encounter of Paul at Athens and the exchanges at the altar of the 'Unknown God' encapsulates this growing adaptation

<sup>4</sup> Ashwin-Siejkowski, Piotr. SCM Studyguide Early Christian Doctrine (SCM Study Guides) (p. 20-21). Hymns Ancient and Modern Ltd. Kindle Edition

<sup>5</sup> Ashwin-Siejkowski, Piotr. SCM Studyguide Early Christian Doctrine *ibid* (p. 21).

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## Activity 2 - Paul in Athens

- Read Acts 17 verses 16 to 34
  - Compare the words given to Paul in this speech with those attributed to Peter, by the author of Acts, on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2;14-36).
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### 3. Jesus: Divine, universal saviour

#### Summary of the Jewish Christian view;

- 3.1 in the SCM Study Guide to Church History, Stephen Spencer summarises the understanding of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem thus: 'Jewish Christians saw Jesus as the long-expected messiah and many believed that he would return with power within a generation (e.g., 1 Thess. 4.15ff.). They were filled with a sense of urgency that this was the final hour. They believed they were to go out to as many people as possible to alert and prepare them for the coming of the messiah and the end of the age. The days were short, the end times were near, and destruction was just around the corner. It was imperative to get people to turn to the Lord so that they would repent, get their lives in order and be ready for his coming.'<sup>6</sup>
- 3.2 He continues a little later by writing; 'The complete parting of Judaism and Christianity still lay in the future. What emerges clearly from Acts and Paul's letters is that the Christian Church in this first phase of its life was a spontaneous movement of renewal from within Judaism, lacking a clear centralised leadership structure. It attracted Gentile believers in increasing numbers and so began to pull in two different directions, with tension and sometimes dispute. Wonderful things were happening, such as people being healed, lives being turned around and bonds forged across continents, but it was a movement of ideas and inspiration among people that had debate and argument at the heart of its life, a sign of vigour and potential. It was not, at that point, a clearly defined institution with obvious boundaries between those who were 'in' and those who were not, but something more nebulous.'<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Spencer . SCM Studyguide Church History (SCM Study Guide) . Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Spencer . SCM Studyguide Church History (SCM Study Guide) ibid

## Paul; theologian and visionary

- 3.3. In the earliest writing of the New Testament – some of the letters of Paul – we see emerging a strain of thought which reflected the direct spiritual experience of Paul in a dynamic interaction with Hellenistic / Greek thought and culture (see above)
- 3.4 What emerges is a view of a Jesus far removed from a charismatic prophetic figure from rural Galilee. He is become the divine member of the Holy Trinity, endowed as divine and human (although what this means has yet to be universally resolved in the Christian Religion). He is the means of salvation; he brings the divine power to establish his people in a new creation. He is (as later writers emphasised<sup>8</sup>) the new Adam.
- 3.5 In this way, the emerging and dominant Christology moves out of a confining Jewish messianic faith to become a universal cosmic presence of the ‘God-in-Christ’ – the ‘**Pantocrator**’ (ruler of all). More often the churches of the west use the term ‘**Christ in Glory**’



*Image of Christ in  
Glory  
Basilica of St John,  
Lateran, Rome  
Late 16<sup>th</sup> century CE*

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<sup>8</sup> e.g., Irenaeus of Antioch

Rowan Williams in his book, 'Why Study the Past? The Quest for the Historical Church'<sup>9</sup> writes of the identity of the Early Church;

Christian groups were not quite like synagogues, nor were they quite like the optional devotional associations looking to exotic deities from abroad - though they had very obvious affinities with both, as the earliest records testify. Their language about themselves was, however, strikingly different. There were at least three elements in this that would have caused puzzlement, especially when put together. In the texts they read to each other in their assemblies, Christians referred to themselves as *hagioi*, as people who were holy or sacred. They called the groups in which they met *ekklesiai*, 'civic assemblies'. And they also described themselves as *paroikoi* or *paroikountes*, 'resident aliens' or 'settled migrants'. They claimed, in other words, that they occupied a distinctive place, the territory that belongs to the divine, that their corporate identity could be compared to a sanctuary; that they were 'citizens' of something; and that their actual roots and loyalties were in another context than the cities in which they actually resided.

A citizen of the empire encountering this sort of vocabulary and reflecting upon it would have been forced to conclude that Christians were identifying their sacred power as something connected with their status as somehow outsiders in the imperial structure. Reluctance to serve in the army or to accept civic office would have reinforced the point. These were people who saw their privileged access to sacred power and legitimacy as bound up with a deliberate and systematic distancing from the legitimate power of the sacred order of the empire; the claim to be both citizens (with the right to a civic assembly) and settled aliens could not but read as a statement of foreign allegiance, even if this was not allegiance to a specific foreign power. The language that defined 'church' was unmistakably a language that raised problems for a system claiming to be the ultimate source of holy and legitimate power.

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<sup>9</sup> © 2005 and 2014 by Rowan Williams. Published by Darton Longman and Todd Ltd. ISBN 978 0 232 53032 2

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### **Activity 3 – salvation according to Paul**

Assume you have no prior knowledge of (or bias towards) Paul and his theology, try to prepare notes on how you understand the following in Paul's teaching;

1. What does Paul argue we need to be saved from?
2. What is this 'salvation'? What is the goal?
3. By what means (how) are people brought to salvation?

In the group – discuss how we respond to these teachings in our demonstrably different culture, with a radically different world view and with two thousand years-worth of history to separate us from Paul's setting.....

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#### **4. Paul – Master-Craftsman of the Gentile Church**

*We refer especially to **1 Corinthians** in this section.*

- 4.1 Paul was a charismatic leader with considerable skills of organisation as well as of spiritual leadership. These he used to great effect to plant and support churches in the eastern Mediterranean area.
- 4.2 At this time the Roman Empire provided a relatively safe environment in which travel (especially by sea) was well-established. The 'Pax Romana' was the 'enabler' for early Christian expansion. Later Roman persecutions were generally localised, episodic (i.e., did not happen all of the time nor over a long period of time) and of limited impact on Church growth in its earliest years.
- 4.3 From the 'Council of Jerusalem' (c49/50 CE – Acts 15) the missionary work of the Church beyond the Jewish community was recognised, authorised and got under way very quickly. Paul was not alone in his journeys – but was to fall out with some of his senior colleagues (e.g., Barnabas). We do not know anything about some major missionary work which carried the Faith beyond the Empire into Africa, across the deserts to India and, evidence indicates, into China. Legends about St Thomas founding the 'Thomist' Church of India reflect a lost history of Christian growth from and beyond the first century.



#### 4.4 The 'Epistles' of Paul

- 4.4.1 As Paul and his companions travelled from city to city (the earliest Churches were urban groups often in port cities) and would stay for some time. However, to maintain contact, continue to instruct the faithful and urge a sense of belonging to the wider Christian community, the letters Paul wrote were a major tool.
- 4.4.2 The Epistles were not personal letters (usually) – rather they were for the whole faithful gathering. They provided that encouragement and steered the teachings in those groups. We assume that these letters were read aloud and studied in the church gatherings for worship and study.
- 4.4.3 The Epistles of Paul are ancient documents. Again, we must avoid anachronisms; not reading them as if they are modern texts. This is further complicated by the fact that in the intervening centuries between Paul's era and our own, there have been major and differing interpretations, study guides, sermons, Papal bulls and theological debates about and on the writings of Paul. The Lutheran 'Salvation by Faith Alone' is perhaps the best-known of these but by no means the only one.

For a clear and helpful introduction to Paul's letters you may like to read 'Introducing Paul's Letters' – chapter 4 of the SCM Study Guide 'The Books of the New Testament' by Ian Boxall – pages 62 – 67.<sup>1</sup>

### 5. Letters to the Corinthians – case study

#### First letter of Paul to the Corinthians (for session 7)

##### 5.1 Introduction

This letter is dated from about 54-55AD. The letter presupposes some time has passed since Paul had left Corinth. Paul had founded the Church at Corinth during 18 months stay there in 49 – 51AD (Acts 18). There the church had comprised mainly ordinary folks with only a smattering of the élite and well-off. However, Paul left the city with two of the leading characters of the Church, Aquila and Priscilla. This may have meant that the leadership was taken by the élite and issues of leadership became the cause of rivalry and dissension. The first four chapters address this issue and spell out the true foundation of the Church – Christ – and the 'right' attitude to leadership in the Church – as demonstrated by Paul himself.

- 5.2 Paul had returned to Ephesus (Acts 19;8-10) after going to Antioch (Acts 18;22). During that time Apollos had arrived in Corinth and had a successful ministry there before moving on (1 Corinthians 16;12).

5.3 Apparently, Paul had written an earlier letter – now lost (1 Corinthians 5;9). 1 & 2 Corinthians show evidence of much correspondence (Fig 3 below). There seems to have been some coming and going between Paul and Corinth;

- Timothy (1 Corinthians 4;17)
- Apollos (1 Corinthians 16;12)
- Sosthenes (possibly 1 Corinthians 1;1)
- Chloe's people (1 Corinthians 1;11)
- A delegation from Corinth comprising Stephanas, Fortunatus and Archaicus (1 Corinthians 16;17) and probably bringing with them a letter from the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 7;1)

Fig.3

**Letters between Paul and the Corinthians**

- 1
*Paul's first letter* (alluded to at 1 Corinthians 5.9; some see a fragment of this letter at 2 Corinthians 6.14—7.1)
- 2
*Letter from the Corinthians* (mentioned at 1 Corinthians 7.1, where Paul begins to address the questions it asked; see also 1 Corinthians 7.25; 8.1; 12.1; 16.1, 12); brought to Paul in Ephesus by delegation (1 Corinthians 16.17)
- 3
*Paul's second letter* (our 1 Corinthians), sent from Ephesus with delegation
- 4
*Paul's third letter, written 'in tears'* (now lost? alluded to at 2 Corinthians 2.4; some think this third letter is 2 Corinthians 10—13), written in preparation for 'another painful visit', which didn't materialize
- 5
*Paul's fourth letter* (2 Corinthians 1—9), sent from Macedonia with Titus and another brother, to make the collection (2 Corinthians 8.17–19)
- 6
*Paul's fifth letter* (2 Corinthians 10—13), written in response to a new crisis in Corinth (the arrival of 'super-apostles')

From 'Books of the New Testament'  
 By Ian Boaxall. Page 73  
 (C) 2007. Published by  
 SCM Press

5.4 **Why the letter was written?**

- a. Written by Paul from Ephesus in response to information he received from visitors (possibly Apollos himself - 1 Corinthians 16;12)
- b. As well as dealing with divisive issues of leadership, the letter is a direct response to problems in the Corinthian church outlined in a letter Paul had received. These included specifically
  - i. Sexual relations between husbands and wives (7;1-24)
  - ii. The unmarried (7;25-40)
  - iii. Food offered to idols (8;1 to 11;1)
  - iv. Spiritual gifts (12;1 to 14;40)
  - v. The collection for the Jerusalem Church (16;1-4)
  - vi. Apollos (16;12)

- c. There are other topics which seem to have also been included even if not in the letter from Corinth as an issue.
  - i. Behaviour in church meetings (11;2-34)
  - ii. Resurrection of the dead (Chapter 15)
- d. Some suggest this was the last of a line of contacts and communications in which we see Paul's ideas and teachings maturing and developing within the context of the wider church and also the specific situations in Corinth.

### 5.5 **A changing context for the Gospel.**

Here we see what happened when the Gospel, originally of rural, Galilean origin and addressed to monotheistic Jews, arrived in the Roman colony of Corinth. This was a bustling, cosmopolitan, pluralist and (I some estimates) decadent city and port. Here life was completely different. Here we discover a Christian community struggling to identify itself as the Church of God in a complex, sophisticated urban setting.

### 5.6 **Structure of the Letter**

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Chapters 1 – 4   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paul's response to reports about divisions within the Church at Corinth.</li> <li>• The reasons for the divisions are a misunderstood message, a misunderstood messenger, and a misunderstanding of Paul's ministry</li> </ul>   |
| Chapters 5 – 10  | <p>Paul addresses the problems of Christian behaviour in the world;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual immorality</li> <li>• Lawsuits among believers</li> <li>• Marriage</li> <li>• The unmarried</li> <li>• Sacrificed food</li> <li>• Forfeiting liberty</li> <li>• The dangers of complacency</li> </ul> |
| Chapters 11 – 15 | <p>Paul gives instructions on worship and doctrine;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public prayer</li> <li>• The Eucharist</li> <li>• Spiritual gifts – love, prophecy, tongues</li> <li>• The resurrection of Christ and of the dead.</li> </ul>  |
| Chapter 16       | <p>Collection for the mother church in Jerusalem<br/>Travel plans<br/>Greetings and farewell.</p>   |

## Appendix A: Selections from 1 Corinthians

For use in session 7 <sup>10</sup>

### **Example 1 – the Issue of Divisions in the Church (Chapter 1;10 to end)**

But I am anxious over your "divisions"

1:10-12 - Brothers and sisters, I urge you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, all to be in agreement. There should be no divisions among yourselves, so that you are united in your beliefs and judgements. <sup>11</sup> For it has been made clear to me by Chloe's people about you, brothers and sisters, that there are quarrels among you. <sup>12</sup> What I mean is that every one of you is saying, 'I belong to Paul,' or 'I belong to Apollos,' or 'I belong to Cephas,' or 'I belong to Christ.'

Do consider how serious these division are!

1:13 - Has Christ been split up? Was Paul crucified for you, or were you baptised in Paul's name?

1:14-17 - I thank God that I did not baptise any of you, except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup> so that no one can say that you were baptised in my name. <sup>16</sup> Yes, I did baptise the family of Stephanas, too; but besides these I do not know that I baptised anyone. <sup>17</sup> After all, Christ sent me not to baptise, but to proclaim the gospel, and not by wisdom of language, which would make the cross of Christ pointless.

1:18 - The message of the cross is folly to those who are on the way to ruin, but for those of us who are on the way to salvation it is the power of God.

The cross shows that God's wisdom is not man's wisdom by any means

1:19 – For it is written: I shall destroy the wisdom of the wise and put aside the discernment of the discerning.

1:20-25 Where are the wise? Where are the learned? And where is the debater of this age? Has not God turned human wisdom to folly? <sup>21</sup> Since in the wisdom of God the world did not recognise God through wisdom, it was God's good pleasure to save believers through the folly of the proclamation. <sup>22</sup> While the Jews demand signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, <sup>23</sup> we are proclaiming a crucified Christ: to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the gentiles' foolishness, <sup>24</sup> but to those who have been called, both Jews and Greeks, a Christ who is both the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> God's folly is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

Nor are God's values the same as man's

1:26-31 - Brothers and sisters, consider your own call; not many of you are wise by human standards, not many influential, not many of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> No, God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the

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<sup>10</sup> All using the Revised New Jerusalem Bible translation

world to shame the strong, <sup>28</sup> God chose the common and contemptible – indeed things that count for nothing – to put aside things that do exist <sup>29</sup> so that no human being might exult before God. <sup>30</sup> From him you exist in Christ Jesus, who for us became wisdom from God, and righteousness and holiness and redemption, <sup>31</sup> so that as it is written: *Let one who exults, exult in the Lord.*

### **Extract 2: Going to Law in a Pagan Court (6;1-11)**

#### **Don't go to law in pagan courts**

**6:1-8** - Does any of you who has an issue with another dare to take it to court before the unrighteous rather than before the saints? <sup>2</sup> Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you incompetent to judge trivial cases? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that we will judge the angels – so what about ordinary matters? <sup>4</sup> But if you have ordinary matters to be judged do you put them before those who have no standing in the church? <sup>5</sup> I say this to your shame. Is there no one among you wise enough to decide between one brother or sister and another? <sup>6</sup> so that one person goes to court against another, and that before unbelievers? <sup>7</sup> Indeed, it is already a failing for you to have lawsuits between yourselves. Why do you not rather suffer injustice? Why not rather suffer the loss? <sup>8</sup> You yourselves commit injustice and inflict loss, and on brothers and sisters.

**6:9-11** - Do you not know that evil-doers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Have no doubt about it! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, sodomites, <sup>10</sup> thieves, the avaricious, drunkards, slanderers and robbers, none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> And that is what some of you were. But you have been washed clean, you have been sanctified, you have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

### **Extract 3: Eating Food offered to Pagan Gods (8;1-13)**

#### **A practical problem: shall we be guided by superior knowledge or love?**

**8:1a** Now about food sacrificed to idols,

**8:1b-3** we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. <sup>2</sup> Someone who claims to know does not yet know in the right way, <sup>3</sup> but someone who loves God is known by him.

**8:4-13** So about eating food sacrificed to idols, we know that no idol in the world really exists, and that there is no God but the one God. <sup>5</sup> Indeed, if there are so-called gods in heaven or on earth (as there are many 'gods' and many 'lords'), <sup>6</sup> for us there is one God, the Father from whom are all things, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we ourselves are through him. The claims of knowledge <sup>7</sup> But not everyone has this knowledge. Some are still so accustomed to idols that they eat the food conscious that it has been sacrificed to idols, and their tender conscience is defiled. <sup>8</sup> But food will not bring us close to God; we neither lose by not eating it nor gain by eating it. <sup>9</sup> Be careful that this freedom of yours does not somehow become a stumbling-block to the weak. <sup>10</sup> For if someone sees you who have knowledge at table in the shrine of an idol, might not their conscience,

weak as they are, be encouraged to eat food sacrificed to idols? <sup>11</sup> So the weak person is destroyed through your knowledge; the brother or sister for whom Christ died. <sup>12</sup> Thus by sinning against brothers and sisters, and wounding their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. <sup>13</sup> Therefore if food causes my brother or sister to fall, I will never eat meat again, to avoid causing such a fall.

#### **Extract 4: Careless Communion; The Eucharist (11;17-34**

##### **I must mention serious faults in your Church**

<sup>11-17-22</sup> In giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you are coming together not for the better but for the worse. <sup>18</sup> In the first place, I hear that when you come together in the assembly there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. <sup>19</sup> Indeed it is inevitable that there should be factions among you so that those among you who are to be trusted should stand out. <sup>20</sup> So when you come together it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, <sup>21</sup> for each of you takes your own supper first, and one is hungry while another is drunk. <sup>22</sup> Do you not have houses for eating and drinking? Or do you despise the Church of God and shame those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I praise you? In this I do not praise you.

##### **To partake of the Lord's supper is a supremely serious thing**

<sup>11-23-25</sup> For the tradition I received from the Lord and also handed on to you is that on the night he was betrayed, <sup>[// Mt 26:26-29; // Mk 14:22-25; // Lk 22:14-20]</sup> the Lord Jesus took some bread, <sup>24</sup> and after he had given thanks, he broke it, and he said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' <sup>25</sup> And in the same way with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. <sup>[Ex 24:1a; Jr 31:31i]</sup> Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.'

<sup>11:26-27</sup> As often as you eat this bread, then, and drink this cup, you are proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes, <sup>27</sup> so that anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily is answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.

<sup>11:28-29</sup> Examine yourself, and only then eat of the bread and drink from the cup. <sup>29</sup> If you eat and drink without recognising the body, you eat and drink judgement to yourself.

##### **Careless communion means spiritual weakness: let us take due care**

<sup>11:30</sup> That is why many of you are weak and ill and a good number have died.

<sup>11:31-32</sup> But if we were critical of ourselves we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged by the Lord we are being educated, to save us from being condemned along with the world.

<sup>11:33-34</sup> So, my brothers and sisters, when you come together for the meal, wait for one another. <sup>34</sup> Someone who is hungry should eat at home, so that coming together does not bring condemnation. The other matters I shall arrange when I come.

## **Extract 5: The Spiritual Gift of Love (Chapter 13)**

### Christian love - the highest and best gift

13:1-3 And now I will show you the most excellent way. <sup>1</sup> If I speak in the tongues of human beings and of angels but do not have love, I have become a sounding bronze or a cymbal clashing. <sup>2</sup> If I have the power of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> And if I distribute all my possessions, and if I hand over my body to be burnt, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

13:4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not jealous; love is not boastful, or puffed up

13:5-6 or rude; it does not insist on its rights, it does not take offence, it does not plan evil, <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth.

7:7-8a It puts up with everything, it believes everything, it hopes everything, endures everything. <sup>8</sup> Love never falls away.

### All gifts except love will be superseded one day

13:8b-10 If there are prophecies, they will become superfluous; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will become superfluous; <sup>9</sup> for we know only in part and we prophesy only in part, <sup>10</sup> but once perfection comes, the partial will be superfluous.

13:11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I reasoned as a child. When I became a man, I put aside the things of childhood,

13:12 for now we see in a mirror, confusedly, but then we shall see face to face. Now I know only partially, then I shall know fully, just as I am fully known.

13:13 Now faith, hope and love abide, the three of them, but the greatest of them is love.

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## Appendix B: Salvation according to Paul

### On the Damascus road

The glorified Lord who appeared to Paul was the one who had died an accursed death on the cross: the whole of Paul's theology is contained in this reversal. Jesus had been condemned by the Law of whom the religious authorities were the guardians; he was accursed of God, who had done nothing to deliver him, as it is written: 'Cursed (by God) is the man who is hanged on the tree' (Deut. 21.23; cf. Gal. 3.13). Now God had glorified this 'accursed' man! That meant that God had taken his side. So the Law which had condemned him was itself condemned by God. The Law had come to an end. For Paul, his very life was falling apart. . . So we can understand how he remained in Damascus for three days, blind, prostrate, trying to make sense of things. And in that tormenting, vast abyss, Jesus took his place. From that time on Paul was to say, 'My life is Christ.'

All his theology can be found here in embryo, like an intuition which it took him all his life to explore. I shall try to bring out some of its main features here.

**Justification by faith.** As a Pharisee, Paul believed himself to be justified by his faithful observance of the Law; he thought that everything he did, his efforts, his 'works', as he called them, made him righteous before God. Now he discovered that only Christ could make him righteous. So it was not a matter of achieving his salvation but of receiving it freely, from God's hands, in faith. By believing in God, by holding fast to Christ with all one's being, by having complete confidence in him, one was saved, made righteous. Of course that did not mean that it was enough to believe and then to act in any old way. Those who believe, those who love, try to live accordingly; however, what they then do is not done in order to compel the love of another; it is because they know that they are loved.

**The grace of God** became a key word in Paul's theology. He discovered that he was loved by God, freely and mercifully. God does not love us because we are good, but in order that we may become good. The source of Paul's joy and security and that of the believer is that they do not rely on what they do or what they are (which can often be demoralizing), but on the love of God, who is faithful.

A Protestant theologian summarised his understanding of Paul's theology thus



Fig. 4

### Paul's Theology

Jesus - a divine figure

Strong apocalyptic structure

Imagery of salvation (blood)

Open to all  
Who have faith

Jesus's sacrifice on the cross  
The greatest possible sacrifice  
'Wipes out' people's sins  
No other sacrifice could do this

Salvation

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